

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KADUNA 00900 181513Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
/064 W

-----072881 191340Z /43

R 181442Z JUL 78
FM AMCONSUL KADUNA
TO /AMEMBASSY LAGOS 692
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 4086

C O N F I D E N T I A L KADUNA 0900

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PDEV, NI
SUBJECT: MORE COMMENTS ON NORTHERN POLITICAL MANEUVERING

REF: KADUNA 0822

1. DURING THE LAST WEEK I DISCUSSED NORTHERN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES WITH DESMOND WILSON, DEPUTY BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER WHO HAS BEEN IN THE NORTH OFF AND ON FOR THE LAST THIRTY YEARS AND WHO HAS EXTENSIVE CONTACTS WITH THE NORTHERN ESTABLISHMENT, AND ALHAJI MAHMOUD IBRAHIM ATTA, WHO OWNS TWO LARGE CONSTRUCTION FIRMS AND IS A FORMER CIVIL SERVANT IN THE NORTHERN REGION WITH APPARENTLY EXTENSIVE CONTACTS WITH NORTHERN ESTABLISHMENT AS WELL AS THE MILITARY. BOTH ECHOED THE SAME THEMES ISA KAITA DISCUSSED REFTEL--YOUNG POLITICIANS HAD MET WITH DIFFICULTIES, THEY WERE TURNING TO THE OLD LEADERS, THE NORTH WOULD UNIFY BEHIND ONE LEADER AND THE NORTH WAS LOOKING TO THE EAST FOR SUPPORT. ALL THREE ALSO STRESSED THAT THE NORTHERNERS FELT THE BEST APPROACH WAS TO AVOID ANNOUNCING ITS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE EARLY IN ORDER TO AVOID ATTRACTING OPPOSITION, CITING THE SAME HAUSA PROVERB THAT A GOOD RACE HORSE IS KEPT IN THE DARK
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PAGE 02 KADUNA 00900 181513Z

UNTIL IT IS TIME FOR THE RACE.

2. IN THEIR ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY BOTH WILSON AND ATTA ALSO THOUGHT THAT THE MIDDLE BELT WOULD JOIN THE NORTH IN ITS NEW POLITICAL GROUPING. NEITHER FELT THAT THE STRONG OPPOSITION OF MIDDLE BELT POLITICIANS IN THE CA ON THE SHARIA ISSUE OR THE ANTI-NORTH VEHEMENCE OF SOME CA

MEMBERS SUCH PAUL UNONGO MADE MUCH DIFFERENCE. IN DISCUSSING THE EMERGENCE OF POTENTIAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES ATTA SAID THAT THE NORTHERN CANDIDATE WOULD FINALLY EMERGE AFTER THE PARTY CONVENTION (STRIKINGLY SIMILAR TO UNONGO'S VIEW OF HOW CLUB 19 WILL SELECT ITS CANDIDATE), BUT ADDED THAT THE MAN WAS ACTUALLY ALREADY SELECTED.

3. COMMENT: WHILE IT IS INTERESTING THAT THREE DIFFERENT SOURCESHGLL SHARE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME VIEW OF NORTHERN POLICIAL ACTIVITIES, WE NOTE THAT ALL THREE APPARENTLY REPRESENT THE ESTABLISHMENT'S VIEW. WE HAVE YET TO CONFIRM FROM YOUNGER POLITICIANS THAT THEY HAVE IN FACT LINED UP WITH THE OLDER LEADERS. THE INSISTENCE IN ALL THREE CASES THAT THE NORTH'S MAN WILL NOT EMERGE IN PUBLIC UNTIL LATER MAKES US WONDER WHETHER THE SPATE OF PUBLICITY ON WAZIRI IBRAHIM MEANS HE IS A STALKING HORSE RATHER THAN THE FRONT RUNNER. FINALLY, WE ARE INTRIGUED WITH THE INSISTENCE OF BOTH ATTA AND WILSON THAT THE MIDDLE BELT IS IN THE NORTH'S CAMP. THIS COULD BE BASED ON THE ASSOCIATION OF TARKA WITH THE NORTHERN GROUP AND AN EVALUATION THAT THE YOUNGER MIDDLE BELT POLITICIANS SUCH A UNONGO ARE NOT GOING TO LEAD THE MIDDLE BELT. IT COULD ALSO MEAN THAT UNONGO AND CLUB 19 HAS REACHED SOME TYPE OF POLITICAL MODUS VIVENDI WITH THE NORTHERN ESTABLISHMENT.

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PAGE 03 KADUNA 00900 181513Z

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KADUNA00900
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780296-0399
Format: TEL
From: KADUNA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780749/aaaaboxx.tel
Line Count: 94
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d1385171-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 KADUNA 822
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1974005
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MORE COMMENTS ON NORTHERN POLITICAL MANEUVERING
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PDEV, NI
To: LAGOS
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d1385171-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014